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AUTHOR Weiser, Margaret G.
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ABSTRACT

The paper traces the development of special education legislation beginning in the 1960's and describes trends in educational programing. The role of the civil rights movement in legislation is noted, as is the advocacy of professional and parent associations. Federal initiatives, especially P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, are discussed. The evaluation of special education programing is traced from its dependence on regular education instructional materials and infrequent reassessment of placement decisions to increased classroom participation of interdisciplinary staff and placement in the public schools of formerly institutionalized students. Future projections are considered: in answer to a survey completed by 43 state or territory special education directors in 1984, the respondents rated in-process or anticipated developments emphasizing those in career and/or independent living skills, early intervention, inservice education for regular teachers and principals, and computer-assisted instruction and/or management. The paper concludes with a focus on trends in early intervention and career education. (CL)

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Developments and Trends in Special Education

Margaret G. Weiser
College of Education
University of Iowa

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The history of special education for handicapped children and youth in the United States began long before the 1950's, but the nature and extent of change in social policy, public understanding, and education characterizing the last 30 years has been dramatic. A summary of this period's accomplishments is sufficient to serve as a basis for understanding today's developments.

The Immediate Past and Present

The civil rights movement can be viewed as a major factor in the enactment of legislation for the handicapped. This social upheaval exposed many inequalities in our society, first for racial minorities and poverty children, and then for handicapped children and youth. Another factor was the composite of the findings of landmark studies by Skeels and Dye (1939) Skeels (1966), Rheingold (1956), and Kirk (1958), all of which stressed the viability of early intervention. The 1960's also produced expert statements by Hunt (1961) and Bloom (1964) highlighting the impact of environment and experience on development. These findings effectively destroyed the already crumbling concept of predetermined ultimate levels of intellectual functioning, and led to the compensatory programs for poor young children, of which Head Start is the most renowned.

Legislation

Beginning in the early 1960's there was rapid though fragmented expansion in the development of policy for the handicapped. The ground swell of early legislation was due in large part to the growing power of several advocacy groups, particularly the National Association

for Retarded Citizens, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. By 1979 there were approximately 140 different federal programs serving the handicapped, of which the most important is the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, popularly known as Public Law 94-142. This law has been described as "the capstone of a revolution that had been in the making in the schools, courts, state legislatures, and Congress" (Lynn, 1983, p. 36). A free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment has become the right of every handicapped child, and due process in classification decisions and placement of their child has become the right of the parents.

Approximately eight years after the passage of P.L. 94-142, the Congress provided another overwhelming affirmation of the federal role in special education by passing the 1983 Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act. There are ten major features of these amendments, of which 4 deal with secondary special education and the transition to post-secondary education, vocational rehabilitation, continuing education, employment, independent living, and other adult services. Two other amendments provided federal funds for the development of early childhood programs for all handicapped children from birth, including the severely and profoundly handicapped. The remaining features are concerned with the training of special education personnel, the encouragement of research, and the encouragement of parent training programs (U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

We can conclude that in the last 20 or 30 years, our federal

government has moved from a position of little concern or involvement to a position of major partner of the local and state public education programs for the handicapped.

Today, (but maybe not tomorrow), it appears that much of the legislation authorizing programs for the handicapped is relatively safe, although subject to continuous scrutiny. The parent and advocacy networks are primarily responsible for the 1983 Amendments, and for the recent defeat of the current administration's efforts to deregulate if not dismantle programs for the handicapped.

Educational Programming

A look at legislation is only part of the picture. A somewhat superficial view of the schools in the 1950's and the 1980's adds another part. A tour of a school district in the 1950's would have shown self-contained special classrooms for the "educable mentally retarded" and/or the "emotionally disturbed," and possibly a class for the orthopedically handicapped. There was no visible provision for the learning disabled or the severely/profoundly handicapped students. In the 1980's, most of the mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed children are in the regular classrooms. The regular teacher bears the primary responsibility with assistance from a special education resource teacher. The few special classes are limited to the severely/profoundly handicapped children, and to the students classified as "learning disabled."

In the 1950's, special education teachers apadpted their instructional materials from those of regular education, or created

their own. In the 1980's, the marketplace is saturated with learning devices and materials for children with special needs.

In the 1950's, the time and efforts of the speech clinician were devoted to screening children for hearing losses, and working with individual children with articulation problems. In the 1980's, the speech and language pathologist is involved with classroom teachers in setting up language development programs, and the clinician is working more with teachers and groups of children than with individual children.

In the 1950's one would have found students in special classes whose progress warranted their return to a regular class, but who remained in their special class because placement decisions were rarely reconsidered. In the 1980's, we find annual multi-discipline assessments (including the parents), with the express purpose of updating educational programs and transferring children back to the regular classroom whenever appropriate. In the 1980's we also find new additions to the educational team: home visiting teachers, resource teachers, consultants, career and independent living skills teachers, teachers of the severely and profoundly handicapped, teachers of preschool handicapped, in addition to parent educators, and physical and occupational therapists. In some states, educational programming starts at birth, or soon thereafter. Also, in the 1980's, you find handicapped persons from the preschool years to their early twenties, who were previously served by residential institutions or community agencies, now in the public schools.

Although Public Law 94-142 is titled the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, not all handicapped children are receiving services. Individual states differ in their beginning ages of educational service from birth (six states) to six years (13 states), with the majority starting at ages five or six years, and in their ending years of educational programming from 18 to 21 years of age.

A look at the 1950's and the 1980's has revealed important changes in the special education field. What can be predicted for the immediate future?

The Future

A survey-by-mail was conducted during the spring of 1984, which was addressed to the directors of special education in the 50 states, the 7 territories, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They were asked to respond to the following question: "What development(s) in special education do you anticipate in your state during the next five years?" Responses were varied, and reflected the individual state's mandated age of eligibility and the funding incentives provided by the federal government. Twenty different in-process or anticipated developments were contained in the 43 responses, of which the top four were (a) career and/or independent living skills, (b) early intervention, (c) in-service education for regular teachers and principals, and (d) computer-assisted instruction and/or management.

The remainder of this report will focus on the trends and developments in early intervention and career education.

Early Intervention

The field of special education has traditionally spent its greatest energies on the young handicapped child. This tradition has been reinforced by the national and program-specific evaluations of preschool compensatory programs (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Gray, Ramsey, & Klaus, 1982; Heber & Garber, 1975; Lazar, Hubbell, Murray, Rosche, & Royce, 1977; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1980), from which we have learned that participation by at-risk children in an early intervention program results in decreased numbers of children either placed in special education programs or required to repeat one or more grades. It has also been documented that early intervention is cost-effective in terms of dollars, and cost-effective in terms of human development. The earlier we identify the handicapped child, the more likely we are to help either ameliorate the handicapping condition or reduce the impact of the handicap.

Educational programming is currently provided by 21 of the 50 states for handicapped children under four years of age. Leaders in the field are encouraging very early intervention for the severely and profoundly handicapped children. These children are unable to explore or manipulate or play in their world. Many of them have been unable to learn because we have been unable to reach them. One of the techniques which has achieved notable success has been the use of teacher-made electrical switches connected to battery-operated mechanisms with an off-on switch. Tape recorders, lights, buzzers, and toys have long been used by teachers in their efforts to stimulate,

to motivate, and to reinforce, but their use has been hampered by the necessity of one-to-one interactions and therefore used when the teacher has a few spare minutes. With a switch attachment, these activities can be controlled by the child, and several switches can be used in combination as the child learns to use separate body parts independently to activate the toys.

Switches can be used to teach cause and effect, to encourage specific body part disassociation, and as a beginning means of communication. They provide the capability to play with a toy. Their use enables severely handicapped children to learn to control their own movements, and to control parts of their environment. The use of switches in this way might even be considered a part of readiness for micro-computers.

Career Education

Traditionally, career education has been defined as job training. Recently, daily living skills have been incorporated in the career education curriculum. These components overlap in many instances. Meyen (1982) asks

> If a person cannot maintain a healthy body, how can he or she work? If a person cannot abide by the laws of a community or state, how can he or she be expected to abide by the rules of the work world? If a person does not know how to use leisure time at home, how can he or she be expected to use a work break effectively? If a person has marital or family relationship problems, how can he or she be expected to perform

at work at full performance potential? (p. 157)

Today, educators are recommending that public education take a broad view of the competencies necessary for adult life. Incorporated in this broad view is a philosophical move from the usual academic curriculum to what we are calling functional academics. The functional curriculum is designed to help handicapped adolescents learn the behaviors and skills essential to transportation, the use of the newspaper, letter writing, banking, telephone communication, budgeting, money skills, calculator math, measurement, home management, food purchase and storage and preparation, personal hygiene, leisure skills, social-sexual behavior, applications for employment and vocational training.

This comprehensive view of education means that classroom teachers, special educators, vocational educators, homemaking and art teachers, parents, and other members of the educational team work cooperatively in developing and improving secondary programs. It also means teamwork and coordination among and between the schools, the community, other service agencies, and business and industry.

The need for the development of more appropriate programs for handicapped adolescents has been intensified by two societal events. There are increasing numbers of severely handicapped children and youth who are moving out of residential institutions and returning to their home communities and public schools. In addition, the current rate of youth unemployment is a major problem in the United States as well as in other countries. The 1983 report of the U.S. Commission

on Civil Rights stated that between 50 and 80 percent of working age adults who reported a handicap were jobless. Without employment, many of these individuals are turning to community services, only to find long waiting lists. Those who do gain entry into public supported day and vocational services experience low wages, slow if any movement toward competitive employment, and segregation from their disabled peers.

Today many services and partnerships are missing in the handicapped individual's transition from school to adulthood. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services has responded by establishing a national priority on improving the transition from school to working life for all individuals with disabilities. Assistant Secretary Madeleine Will has conceptualized a framework for making the priority operational. The first bridge from school to working life involves only those services available to the population at large. The second bridge involves time-limited services that are designed to lead to independent employment, and are generally restricted to individuals thought capable of making it on their own. Time-limited services are normally terminated when the individual obtains employment. The third bridge represents a fundamental change in much current policy and practice. It proposes employment with whatever on-going support services are necessary to maintain that employment (Will, 1984).

Examples of this third bridge are in operation today, sponsored by Divisions of Developmental Disabilities. A model program has been

developed by the University of Iowa, and is designed to meet the needs of individuals whose physical and/or mental disabilities present particularly complex barriers to the successful identification of vocational objectives. The Vocational Education Assessment Service includes comprehensive interdisciplinary evaluations by professional persons from audiology, dentistry, medicine, psychology, speech pathology, recreation, physical and occupational therapy, and social services. These evaluation findings are integrated with vocational and educational appraisals which are individually designed and conducted by professionals from vocational and special education. Performance samples from a variety of job environments--from simulated experiences to placement in competitive community jobs--are utilized to provide opportunities for appraisal of the individual's performance in job settings that range from being highly structured to minimally supervised. No reliable assessment can ignore training and education, and these are interwoven continuously. At the end of an intensive three weeks, the final report accompanies the individual back to the home community. It not only describes the individual's vocational and educational strengths, needs, and interests, but recommends specific curricular objectives, instructional strategies, and program alternatives. Members of the assessment team go to the community to help put into action their recommendations. They are available to the service professionals for on-site consultation both prior to and following the assessment.

Other communities and agencies are also establishing their own

"third bridges." For instance, the Chamber of Commerce in Dallas, Texas, coordinates city-wide business involvement in the public schools' career development program and in job training and placement. A Lifelong Career Development Project for Handicapped Individuals is conducted by the University of Missouri -- Columbia with funds from the federal government. Federally funded projects in California, Kansas, Virginia, Wisconsin, Oregon, as well as in Iowa, have as their priority to place students in competitive employment positions rather than in sheltered workshops or work activity centers ("Work and the," 1984).

Concluding Statement

The field of special education is still on the move in the United States. We are moving from a deficit-oriented, categorically bound system to the intent of the Education for All Handicapped Act. It is an exciting time to be involved, because we still have many promises to keep, and miles to go before we sleep (adapted, Frost, 1962).

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